U.S. Decision to Sanction International Crime Court Was Coordinated With Israel, Source Says

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U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to impose sanctions on the International Criminal Court was coordinated with Israel, according to a source familiar with matter.

The move was discussed in a meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Jerusalem last month, the source said on Thursday.

Trump announced that his administration is placing sanctions on the International Criminal Court in retaliation for the court’s intention to probe the conduct of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Hours later, Netanyahu congratulated the decision to impose sanctions on the “corrupt and biased International Criminal Court,” calling it a “kangaroo court” and a “politicized court obsessed with conducting witch hunts against Israel, the United States and other democracies that respect human rights.”

Netanyahu accused the court of fabricating “outlandish charges,” such as that “Jews living in their historic homeland constitutes a war crime.”

Last year, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda stated that there is reasonable basis to investigate Israel for its actions but has requested the court to decide over the question of jurisdiction.

The Prosecutor’s Office specifically noted allegations that Israel has been involved in demolishing Palestinian property and evicting Palestinians from the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

It also referenced 2014’s Operation Protective Edge, the war in the Gaza Strip, as well as Israel’s plan to evacuate residents of the Bedouin village Khan al-Ahmar, and Israeli construction of settlements in the West Bank

Israel was not mentioned in Trump’s executive order, but it was mentioned in a White House press statement that explained the decision.

“Despite repeated calls by the United States and our allies to reform, the International Criminal Court has taken no action to reform itself and continues to pursue politically-motivated investigations against us and our allies, including Israel,” the statement said.

The statement also said that “the President’s Executive Order makes clear – the United States will continue to use any means necessary to protect our citizens and our allies from unjust prosecution by the International Criminal Court.”

The ICC decided to investigate after prosecutors’ preliminary examination in 2017 found reasonable grounds to believe war crimes were committed in Afghanistan and that the ICC has jurisdiction.

ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda wants to investigate possible crimes committed between 2003 and 2014, including alleged mass killings of civilians by the Taliban, as well as the alleged torture of prisoners by Afghan authorities and, to a lesser extent, by U.S. forces and the CIA.